

# Like Magic, these 6 will go to college

## BASKETBALL STAR MAKES IT A PROMISE

By Ryan Alessi

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FRANKFORT — Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the NBA Hall-of-Famer turned businessman, stopped by Frankfort on Thursday to support education and ended up giving \$10,000 to help a group of Lexington students go to Europe.

Oh, he also promised to help them go to college.

Johnson, appearing at a news conference with Gov.

Steve Beshear, said he was impressed by work being done to encourage achievement of African-American students at the Black Males Working Academy — a partnership between Fayette County Public Schools and First Bracktown Inc.

He announced his foundation would pay \$10,000 toward a 10-day trip to Europe in June for 20 academy students.

He then turned to six students at the news conference, who ranged in age from 11 to 17, and promised that his Magic Johnson Foundation, which this year is helping 160 students attend college, would do the same for them.

"When you guys graduate, you'll have a check waiting on you," he said, prompting applause from onlookers and curious lawmakers who stopped by the Capitol reception room to see Johnson.

Aside from admiring the height of the 6-foot-9 Johnson, the students later said they were grateful for his support — even if it means added pressure to succeed.

"Actually, it puts a big, huge burden on us ... to make sure we stay on top of our game," said James Hardin, 17, who is interested in engineering. "I'm speechless."

Another student, George Livingston, a 17-year-old senior, said he's preparing to attend the University of Louisville's nationally ranked entrepreneurship program.

The Black Males Working Academy, founded by former Fayette County educator Rosalyn Akins, is attended by 140 middle and high school students. The high school students' average score on the ACT test is 22.5, Akins said, compared to the national average for African-American students of 17, according to the 2007 ACT College Readiness Report.

The academy also takes students on trips to scout colleges and for cultural awareness, such as the summer program in Europe. The group is scheduled to travel through England, Germany, Switzerland and France, Akins said.

"One of the things I wanted to do before I die was to go to the Louvre and see the *Mona Lisa*, and, through this program, I'll have the opportunity to see the *Mona Lisa* in person," said Trevor McNary, 16, who wants to be a lawyer.

The academy, which launched a fund-raising drive for the trip, is still trying to raise the last \$25,000 to cover the \$65,000 in expenses.

Johnson, meanwhile, pledged his continued support to help open doors for students the way basketball did for him.

"Anything that I can do, don't hesitate, because I'm trying to be an example to these young men and (show) what can happen when you focus, when you're disciplined."

"I went from the basketball court to the boardroom. ... You can go straight to the boardroom."